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—BY—

W. G. VAN T. SUTPHEN.

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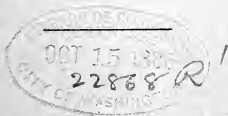
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IN THE DARK,

A SOCIETY FARCE.

BY

W. G. VAN TASSEL SUTPHEN.



CHICAGO.

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(1546)

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IN THE DARK.

CHARACTERS.

MR. EUSTACE, a placid old gentleman.

MISS EUSTACE, his sister, of uncertain age.

MISS JACQUELINE EUSTACE, his daughter, an heiress.

MR. HENRY RAYMOND, a young man who *must* marry an heiress.

MR. WILTON CLARE, his friend, a young man who would like to.

JAMES, a footman.

CLARK, a policeman.

Time of playing twenty-five minutes.

COSTUMES.—MODERN.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R means right—the actor facing the audience; *L*, left; *C*, center; *R*, *C*, right center; *U E*, upper entrance, etc.

TMP96-006764

IN THE DARK.

SCENE. *The drawing-room in Mr. Eustace's villa at Bel Air. Mr. Eustace, Miss Eustace and Jacqueline are discovered. Enter James with mail bag. Doors R and L. Fireplace and screen back L.*

James. The post, sir.

Mr. Eustace (taking bag and opening it). Only one letter, and that one for—

Miss Eustace. Me?

Mr. Eustace. No, for me. Why, it is from young Raymond, my old friend's son, and tells me that he is in town, and will call here this evening. Jack, you can begin to prepare for another conquest.

Jacqueline. What nonsense, papa, *(blushes furiously)*.

Miss Eus. (tartly). Why do you address Jacqueline by such an absurd name? One would think you were speaking of a canary bird, or of a Shetland pony, of anything, in fact, but a young lady,

Mr. Eus. (warmly). My dear sister, your comments are entirely uncalled for. Say another word and I'll have her named Jackson by special act of legislature. Yes, Jackson, *ho Jove*. If a man— *(Enter James, L, announces Messrs. Raymond and Clare. Miss Eustace and Jacqueline vanish with precipitation)*

Mr. Eus. (rushing forward and effusively embracing Clare). My dear Raymond, you are as welcome—bless me, what a likeness! Would know you among a thousand. And you his son! Impossible!

Clare (striving to extricate himself). But I'm not, you know. It's the other fellow.

Mr. Eus. (still holding on and roaring at the top of his voice). Don't tell me you are his son. I can't believe it, I really can't.

Clare (vainly struggling to get away). I don't want you to believe it. I wouldn't be any one's son under any consideration. I'm another person altogether

Mr. Eus. (holding him firmly at arm's length). Don't tell me anything of the kind. I never was mistaken in my life, and I don't intend to be now. *(Suddenly dragging him under the gas-jet)*. So you are an impostor, are you? Having an eye on the silver, I suppose? Here, James, a policeman, quick. I got one of these infernal sneak thieves at last.

Clare (feebly). My good sir, that gentleman is Mr. Raymond. I am simply his friend.

Mr. Eus. (staggering back). God bless me, what a remarkable misunderstanding. So you—*(Rushing at Raymond, who retreats hastily behind one chair, as Clare sinks exhausted in another.)*

Raymond. Yes, I am, but you'll excuse me. You see, my dear sir, I am very peculiarly constituted, and my collar-bone is liable to fracture

under the slightest provocation. I should be pleased to make your acquaintance, but you will acknowledge that it would be an extremely awkward thing if you should accidentally put me out of joint.

Mr. Eus. (retreating). How very extraordinary.

Ray. Extraordinary, yes. Not that I am in the habit of coming to pieces on careful handling, but still I don't care to run the risk of being promiscuously dislocated under the guise of friendship.

Mr. Eus. (sinking into his chair). God bless me!

Ray. (cautiously approaching.) My dear Mr. Eustace, I am delighted to have met you—by deputy. (*CLARE groans.*) Suppose we consider the acquaintance as formed, and now allow me to present my friend, Mr. Clare.

Mr. Eus. (with alacrity and grasping both gentlemen by the hand.) My dear sirs, I owe you both a thousand apologies, and you must signify your acceptance of them by dining with me to-night.

Ray. Should be charmed, but—

Mr. Eus. Not a word. I won't listen. You shall dine with me or not at all. I insist upon it. I shall really feel obliged to press my request.

Ray. (with a wry face.) No, don't; that is, don't press it any more. We shall be most happy.

Mr. Eus. Well, then, that's settled. You'll excuse me while I settle with your driver. James will show you up. Not a word. (*Exit in a great hurry, L.*)

James. One moment, gentlemen. (*Disappears, R.*)

Ray. My dear Clare, accept my most heartfelt thanks. You went through the ordeal like a hero of romance. The only thing I would criticise is that you were a trifle constrained in your manner. I didn't suppose you had so much endurance about you, I really didn't. You should take out a patent on yourself as a pneumatic buffer.

Clare. (surveying himself in the glass.) You're very candid in acknowledging your obligations. It's only a matter of two broken ribs. I don't know but what it's three. Kindly pull my shoulder-blade into place. Thank you. Will you—

Ray. (suddenly horror-stricken.) My dear Clare, an awful thought has just struck me. I haven't any evening clothes with me, and Mr. Eustace is the most particular of men.

Clare. (feebly.) Well?

Ray. My dear Wilton, do try to act like something else than a pressed autumn leaf, and think up some way out of this predicament. You don't happen to have another evening suit in your traps?

Clare. No, I haven't; that is, I have two sets of everything except the coat. (*brightening up.*) How would it do for us to take turns in going down to dinner? You wear the coat for a while and then I. Trust me, and I'll make everything work beautifully.

James. (entering.) This way, now, gentlemen. (*Clare follows James out, R.*)

Ray. (walking up and down the room.) Ridiculous as this idea is, I may be able to turn it to some advantage. I understand that there are two young ladies in the house who answer to the name of Miss Eustace. It would be awkward for my prospects if I began paying attention to the

wrong one. If I let Clare go down to dinner alone, he can find out for me which is the right one, and then I can act accordingly. I'll do it. (*Rushes out as Mr. Eustace enters, L.*)

Mr. Eus. (walking to the fireplace.) Young Raymond seems to be a fine young fellow; I like him. I know what he is here for. He is after Jacqueline, and on the whole I don't know that she could do better. His family is all that can be desired, and even if he is poor, Jacqueline has enough for two. By the way, it just strikes me that I don't know he is young Raymond after all. He brings no letters with him. However, he can't do much harm until I can find out about him, even if he is an impostor. (*Clare, Miss Eustace and Jacqueline, all in evening dress, enter the room, R.*)

Mr. Eus. (with emprossement.) My dear Mr. Clare, allow me to introduce Miss Eustace. (*They bow.*) And this (*turning to Jacqueline*) is Jack, as we all call her, Miss Jackson if you like (*with a defiant glance at Miss Eustace*).

Miss Eus. (with freezing dignity.) Permit me to present—(*enter James.*) Dinner is served, sir.

Clare. (aside.) I don't begrudge the heiress to Raymond. Forty-five if she's a day.

Mr. Eus. Mr. Clare, will you escort Miss Eustace and Mr. Raymond—why hallo! (*turning around*) where is Mr. Raymond?

Clare. (confusedly.) He will be down in a moment. He particularly requested that you should not wait for him.

Miss Eus. But we will wait for him. We couldn't possibly think of going on without him.

Jac. Why, of course not.

Clare. (awkwardly.) But you see he can't possibly come because—(*aside*) Oh! confound it all, that won't do—(*aloud*) that is, don't you know he will look at it in the light of an especial favor, and (*brilliantly*) you see he don't like soup. Makes him ill you know to even look at it. Very curious, but the solemn truth, upon my honor.

Jac. In that case we might dispense with it altogether.

Clare. (in alarm.) Not on any account, I mean on my account. I'm passionately fond of soup myself. Wouldn't think I had dined if I didn't get it.

Mr. Eus. (testily.) And meanwhile it is all getting cold. If the case stands this way we'll send up for him afterward. Now if you are ready. (*They retire, R., and Raymond enters in full evening dress, with the exception of his coat.*)

Ray. (walking nervously up and down.) Well, this is certainly a pleasant position for a leader of society. I begin to think that the situation is a little awkward. More than that, I'm afraid Clare will spoil everything any way. There he is at it now. (*Runs to the door and listens. Mr. Eustace is heard talking loudly in the adjoining room.*) What, must go up yourself? Nonsense. Here, James, tell Mr. Raymond—Well, if you really prefer to go yourself—A plate of soup?—What's that?—Want it for your dog? Didn't know you had one here, but of course take it along—Don't mention it—Eh! a silver spoon? What's that?—Educated. Who? Oh! the dog. I see, ha! ha! very good. Aristocratic tastes and all that. James, bring another spoon. The door to the right, Mr. Clare.

Ray. (gasping.) Gracious Heavens! (*Enter Clare, R., with a plate of soup in his hand.*)

Clare. (holding it out to Raymond.) Here, take your infernal soup. Well, I flatter myself that I have managed this thing admirably.

Ray. (sarcastically.) You certainly have. Your diplomacy in getting hold of that soup was really Machiavellian in its deep, demoniacal cleverness. The excuse for wanting a spoon was worthy of Metternich. (*With a forced attempt at a little innocent merriment.*) An educated dog. Very good; ha! ha! (*Savagely.*) Who the deuce told you I wanted any soup at all? You will ruin everything by your clumsiness.

Clare. (weakly.) Look here, Raymond. You're rather hard on a fellow, seems to me. I couldn't bring you out everything on the bill of fare. You're not in a restaurant, you know.

Ray. (setting down the soup and flourishing the spoon wildly in the air.) My dear Wilton, I would advise you, as a friend, to tie a wet towel around your head and endeavor to keep quiet. Your brain won't stand the pressure you are putting upon it. Let me have that coat (*takes it from Clare and puts it on, abstractedly slipping the spoon into his waistcoat pocket as he does so.*) Now then, tell me which is Miss Eustace.

Clare. The one in light blue.

Ray. And the other young lady is?

Clare. Miss—Oh! confound it! what was her name? Jack, Jacket, Jackstone, Jackstraw, Jackson. Yes, that was it, Jackson—Miss Jackson.

Ray. Very well. Now do keep quiet. I'll make it all right inside. You're taken suddenly ill, obliged to lie down, and all that.

Clare. And you?

Ray. (with his hand on the door.) I'll go in and eat the rest of the dinner. (*Exit, R.*)

Clare. (taking up the plate of soup.) Well, this is pleasant for me. Lucky I had the presence of mind to bring this out, or I might have starved. This is quite like being on a desert island. The only trouble is that the bill of fare is a trifle monotonous. I was obliged to eat two plates of this stuff inside to give Raymond time to get ready, and now I've got to get away with this one to keep up the character of the dog. (*Enter James, R.*) Ah! James. That's your name, I believe?

James. Yessir.

Clare (placing the soup plate carefully behind the door). It may possibly strike you, James, as rather singular seeing me here. I begin to think myself, the situation is a little peculiar; but I can't enter into details just at present. How is dinner getting along?

James. They're at the roast, sir.

Clare. Mr. Raymond is enjoying himself, I suppose?

James. Nothink better than them ducks he'd ever eaten. So he told Mr. Eustace.

Clare (with interest). What! Is there roast duck?

James. Yessir, and prime.

Mr. Eus. (from within). Try some of this yellow label, Mr. Raymond. Nothing better.

Clare. That settles it, James.

James. Yessir.

Clare. I want your coat for a couple of hours. There will be a dollar for you.

James (with alacrity, taking it off and handing it to Clare). Oh! sir.
Clare (putting it on). In the right hand inside pocket of it—when you get it back. (*Running to hall door R.*) Now for my revenge. I'll cut Raymond out, and marry the heiress myself. One moment to brush up, then I'll enter on the conquest. (*Exit R., leaving James in open-mouthed astonishment.*)

James. Precious queer doinks, I'm blowed if it ain't. Blest if I havink been reg'larly done. (*Enter Raymond L. James disappears R.*)

Ray. (throwing off his coat). Now then—Why! Clare, I say, Clare! (*Rushes out into hall.*)

(*Enter James R. He takes up coat and puts it on.*)

James. Heavink be thanked. I couldink 'ave 'oped for this. Wot a blessink. (*A bell rings.*) Comink d'rectly, sir. (*Exit R.*)

(*Enter Raymond L.*)

Raymond. I can't find him anywhere. Hallo! Where's my coat? Can he have taken it and gone in again?

Mr. Eus. (from within.) No use in waiting longer; James, open the doors.

Raymond (in consternation.) Just my luck; and no chance to get out. (*Jumps behind the fire screen, as the party from the dining room comes in.*)
Miss Eustace sits down and begins to fan herself. Jacqueline walks aimlessly around the room.

Mr. Eus. (after a moment's silence). I must say that the way in which my guests have been appearing and disappearing is, to say the least, extraordinary. I had expected to have two gentlemen to dine with me. Instead of that I have had two—well, I won't call them swindlers, just yet—and a dog to lunch. It may be all right, but it strikes me it would be well to count the spoons.

Raymond (from behind the screen). Well this is pleasant. Gracious heavens, if I should be discovered! He'd never give me a chance even to explain. (*Jacqueline, who has approached the fire, looks carelessly over the screen, and quickly suppressing a pardonable desire to scream, nods in answer to Raymond's vigorous pantomimic gestures, and, seating herself, begins unconcernedly to turn over the leaves of a book.*)

Miss Eus. It certainly is very queer where they have gone, and that Mr. Clare was such a nice young man.

Mr. Eus. (gruffly). That is a well known characteristic of your confidence man.

Jac. (decidedly). You will never make me believe that of Mr. Raymond, at least.

Ray. (sotto voce). Bless you for that. That Miss Jackson is certainly a fine girl.

Clare (coming in L., smiling and bowing.) Mr. Eustace, I owe you a thousand apologies.

Mr. Eus. (coldly.) I've just sent to find out if you don't owe me something else as well. I must say, sir, that the events of this evening have somewhat perplexed me. Mr. Raymond left the table in a great hurry half an hour ago, and no one seems to know anything about him.

Clare. No; you don't say so. (*aside*) This is an excellent opportunity for me to press my suit. (*To Mr. Eustace*) My dear sir, I am really at a loss.

Mr. Eus. And I'm afraid I am (*with marked emphasis. Sits down and stares gloomily at the wall.*)

Ray. (*aside.*) I must say I am beginning to feel uncomfortable.

Clare. (*aside.*) It seems to be rather frosty around here. I had better make sure of the heiress while I can. (*Crosses over to Miss Eustace*), My dear madam—

Miss Eus. (*with pretended severity.*) Mr. Clare, I don't know what to think of you.

Clare (*taking a seat by her.*) Oh! Miss Eustace, if I could only flatter myself that you did think of me. (*aside*) Horrible old thing, but worth a cool half million.

Ray. (*disgustedly.*) The beggar is actually making love to the heiress, and my father has threatened to cut me off with a shilling if I don't get her.

Miss Eus. (*tapping him playfully with her fan.*) Oh! you flatterer. You're like all the rest of you wretched men.

Clare (*tenderly.*) Miss Eustace, if I thought—(*aside*) The old hag was only waiting for a chance to get her claws on me. Well, I'm lucky, as the world goes.

Ray. (*in alarm.*) The fellow is really cutting me out, and the next thing I know I'll be arrested as a swindler, lose the heiress, and be ordered by my respected father never to darken his door again.

Miss Eus. (*softly.*) Pray go on, Mr. Clare. You were about to say—

Clare (*aside.*) Those teeth and that complexion will certainly kill me. (*aloud*) I have been silent thus far, Miss Eustace, but it has not been through indifference. You may not credit me when I say—(*aside*) Forty-two if she's a day, but no matter.

Ray (*despairingly.*) Oh! for a dress coat to hire. I'd pay a thousand dollars a minute for one.

Miss Eus. (*sighing deeply.*) I, too, have suffered, Mr. Clare. I, too, have known—

Mr. Eus. (*starting up suddenly and ringing the bell.*) This has got to be cleared up. (*To James, who appears L.*) Call a policeman. (*To Clare*) It's my settled opinion, sir, that you're no better than you should be, while your friend is an impostor. Yes, sir, an impostor, I say, in pretending to be the son of my old friend.

Ray. Oh for the trap door of a theatrical ghost!

Clare (*springing to his feet.*) Such language, sir, demands an explanation.

Mr. Eus. (*determinedly.*) It does, and I intend to have it. (*An embarrassed silence ensues.*)

Mr. Eus. (*walking to fire-place.*) It strikes me that it is unpleasantly cool in here. That screen should be moved.

Ray (*in agony.*) On the contrary, I find it rather warm.

Fac. (*placing herself before it.*) Not on any account. It would make the room perfectly unbearable.

Clare (*aside.*) It's a good deal that way now.

Mr. Eus. (*warmly.*) But I insist, and it shall be moved. (*As he seizes*

hold of it the gas goes out. The ladies scream, and Mr. Eustace, rushing blindly forward, seizes James by the throat and calls loudly for the police.)

Ray (rushing out.) The heiress be hanged. Only let me get out of this place. *(Runs up against Miss Eustace, who immediately falls into his arms.)*

Clare (seizing Mr. Eustace by the hand, and shouting with the voice of a stentor.) Appearances, it is true, are against me, but let the purity and strength of the affection I bear—

Mr. Eustace (lustily) James, I say, James, James, that policeman, quick. I've got one of the villains here.

(Jacqueline in the meantime succeeds in getting the gas lighted just as the policeman rushes in. Clare drops Mr. Eustace's hand, and staggers back, and there is a general moment of stupefaction, during which Miss Eustace takes the opportunity to faint in Raymond's arms.)

Mr. Eus. (pointing to Raymond.) Arrest that man, officer *(pulling the fatal spoon out of his pocket.)* Here's the stolen property in his possession now—*flagrante delicto*, you know.

Policeman (starting back.) What! arrest Mr. Henry Raymond?

Mr. Eus. (in astonishment.) Then you know him, do you?

Ray. Of course he does. Clark was an old coachman of my father's. *(To the unconscious Miss Eustace in a whisper.)* You will excuse, I know, the suddenness and informality of my addresses in the sincerity of the motives which have led me—

Mr. Eus. (bewildered.) But what does it all mean?

Ray (aside.) I may win all yet. *(aloud.)* Explanations will come later. Now, inopportune as it may seem, I have to ask of you your daughter's hand. *(Holding Miss Eustace up to view.)*

Mr. Eus. (in astonishment.) My daughter! Why, Jacqueline is my daughter.

Ray. (hastily depositing Miss Eustace on the sofa and seizing Jacqueline by the hand.) Of course I mean this young lady. *(To Jacqueline.)* Only a mistake in the dark, my darling. *(Aside.)* Thank heaven, I begin to see it.

Mr. Eus. (smiling.) Well, we are beginning to get a little light at last. Rather a curious game you have played, though.

Clare (dolefully.) And one in which I seem to have been undeniably euchred.

Ray. My dear Wilton, you must remember that you made the game hearts yourself.

Miss E. (suddenly reviving and crossing over to Clare.) Yes, and he shall stand by it.

Mr. Eus. (to Raymond.) There certainly is not much use in playing against you. You seem to hold all the winning cards.

Jac. (blushing.) Don't forget to count me in, papa.

Mr. Eus. (laughing.) Ah! yes, I had almost forgotten you. Including the "Jack" of trumps.

Ray. (leading Jacqueline forward.) Well then, suppose we proceed to establish some kind of a mutual understanding, for I confess that I am even yet, as no doubt you all are—

ALL. Slightly in the dark.

CURTAIN.

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